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REV. MR. BANCROFT's

Eulogy

ON THE CHARACTER OF THE LATE

GEN. GEORGE WASHINGTON.

BRITISH MUSEUM

AN

EULOGY

ON THE CHARACTER OF THE LATE

GEN. *GEORGE WASHINGTON.*

DELIVERED BEFORE THE INHABITANTS

OF THE

TOWN OF WORCESTER,

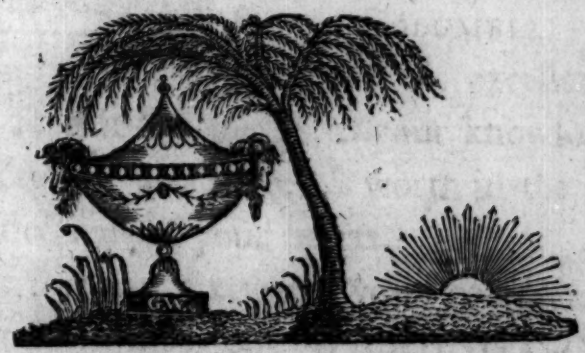
COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS,

ON SATURDAY THE 22d OF FEBRUARY

1800.

BY AARON BANCROFT.

Printed according to a VOTE of said Town, requesting a Copy for the Press, and directing that each Head of a Family should be furnished with one.



Worcester:
PRINTED BY ISAIAH THOMAS, JUN.
March——1800.

AN

EULOGY

ON THE CHARACTER OF THE LATE

GEN. GEORGE WASHINGTON.

DELIVERED BEFORE THE INHABITANTS

OF THE

TOWN OF WORCESTER,

IN CONVENTION OF MASSACHUSETTS,

ON SATURDAY THE 3rd OF FEBRUARY

1800.

BY AARON [illegible].

BRITISH MUSEUM

AN

EULOGY.

IN the ſolemnity of the hour, you, my FELLOW TOWNSMEN, call upon me to paint the character and to portray the virtues of the favorite SON OF COLUMBIA. Unable to riſe to the height of his excellence, I muſt ſubmit his merits to your knowledge of his actions; and lodge his worth in the grateful affections of your hearts.

ON this day, ſixtyeight years complete their revolutions, ſince our WASHINGTON was given to his country. The Parent of Being endowed him with ſuperior powers of mind and body. Theſe by the progreſs of time were expanded to the moſt commanding features of

man. His clear and comprehenſive underſtanding was improved by a general acquaintance with ſcience, an extenſive knowledge of hiſtory, and an intimate view of human nature. Poſſeſſing theſe grand principles of knowledge, he early diſcovered a happy genius to apply them to practice. His opinions were always formed upon an high ſcene of obſervation. His capacity can be meaſured only by the ſphere in which he moved. Elevated offices he filled with dignity, and difficult undertakings he accompliſhed with renown.

His youthful eſſay of enterpriſe and patriotiſm diſplayed the bold lines of his character, and gave a ſure pledge of his meridian ſplendor. Commiſſioned to carry, to an encroaching enemy, on a diſtant frontier, the juſt remonſtrances of his government; he ſuſtained the fatigues and dangers of the embaſſy with the conſtancy of the veteran ſoldier; with Vauban's penetration he traced the ſite of the fortreſs which was to be the future protection of the country; he conciliated the irritated minds of the Indian Tribes; and, on his return, bore honorable teſtimony of the addreſs and fidelity with which he executed his miſ-

ſion. The province of his nativity appreciated the merit of his ſervice, and appointed him to command the troops embodied to enforce his remonſtrance. His maiden ſword was not unſheathed in vain: In his firſt campaign the laurel was entwined, that ſince has flouriſhed around his temple with perennial, with encreaſing verdure.

On the next ſummer, General Braddock commanded a well appointed army to repel the French from their encroachments, and we find WASHINGTON an extra Aidde-camp in his family. His knowledge of the country, his acquaintance with the Indian mode of warfare, enabled him to give advice, which might have inſured ſucceſs to the expedition: But the European General, in the pride of profeſſional ſkill, ſpurned the advice of the American Youth; and for his temerity, he loſt his life, and his defeated army was indebted to the prudence and bravery of our Young Hero for their preſervation from ruin.

In the ſubſequent campaigns, the fatigues of the field became oppreſſive to a conſtitution not yet grown into the firmneſs of manhood. Pulmonary ſymptoms warned him to retire to

the care of his friends. This interval was employed to form and ſtrengthen the ſocial ties, to cultivate and exerciſe the ſocial affections, and to follow the leading bias of his mind in the purſuits of philoſophy and practical agriculture.

ALTHOUGH warmly attached to domeſtic life, and ſupremely happy in his family, he was not permitted to enjoy the pleaſures of philoſophic retirement. Heaven devoted him to the public, and the public demanded his care and labor.

FROM the cloſe of the French war, to the commencement of public reſiſtance to the impoſitions of the Britiſh Parliament, the judicial concerns of his country, and the military and legiſlative tranſactions of his province, engroſſed his time. When the affairs of our country approached their criſis, and the wiſdom of our nation was collected to decide her deſtiny, among an aſſembly as auguſt and venerable as America ever ſaw, was our Patriot. When the appeal was made to the ſword, by the unanimous will of this body, he was placed at the head of our armies. With a "band of undiſciplined huſbandmen," he reſtrained the operations of a veteran army;

with nine rounds of powder to a man, he, for ſix months, confined them to their quarters;* and, when his ſtock of ammunition warranted the attempt, he drove them from the fortified capital of this Commonwealth.

Ye Veterans, who followed his ſtandard and fought under his banner, ye beſt can recount the arduous conflicts of the ſubſequent years of his military command. Ye can inform us of the fortitude he exhibited when every heart was deſpondent—the abilities he diſplayed as a commander—the appearances he aſſumed to deceive the enemy at the hazard of his own reputation—the conſtancy with which he perſiſted in his own ſyſtem of war, though urged to deſperate enterpriſes by the ardent and ſanguine. Ye ſaw his undaunted ſpirit, his boundleſs reſources in the day of defeat; and beheld his moderation and humanity in the hour of victory. Ye can witneſs, that in him ambition was ever an incitement to the nobleſt actions.

His military triumphs complete—American Independence acknowledged, and his country viſited with the beams of peace, he

* See Gen. Washington's Letter to the Preſident of Congreſs.

carried into the ſhade of retirement, the affection and confidence of his army, the gratitude of his country, and the applauſe of the world.

We thought he had then attained the zenith of human glory. The prayer of his warmeſt friend, on this point, was ſummed in the petition, may no unpropitious event take place to ſully the luſtre of his atchievements; in quietneſs may he deſcend to the grave, the laurel unwithered on his brow.

Not ſo the will of heaven. The decree had been regiſtered in the divine archives, that America was free and independent: The American Joſhua had led his people into the promiſed land: But the band was wanting which might unite the parts of the nation: Our Republic was deſtitute of the neceſſary principle, to give energy to her powers and force to her will. Among the Sages who aroſe to fix the centre of attraction to our political bodies, and to mark the zone, in which the ſun of our national life and power ſhould revolve, was our Patriot, firſt among equals. Their ſyſtem we adopted, as the ark of our political ſafety, amidſt the deluge of popular factions, whoſe torrents had ſwept every preceding Republic

from the face of the earth. Through United America there was but one voice reſpecting the man who ſhould preſide in its adminiſtration.

The experiment of a Republican form of government was then to be deciſively made; and the world in ſolemn ſilence attended the iſſue. On the dawn of an adminiſtration, in which new paths were to be explored, firſt principles adopted, and precedents eſtabliſhed, the friends of our Stateſman were tremblingly alive. But this new ſphere of public action diſplayed talents, which before had not fully been called into exerciſe. With the eye of intuition, he ſurveyed the relations of his country, and with his own integrity and firmneſs purſued her intereſts. Under his auſpices, the ſalutary maxim was confirmed, that a ſacred regard to moral obligations, the obſervance of public faith, the undeviating adherence to the plain rules of truth and rectitude, are more certain pledges of national attachment, and ſurer principles of ſucceſs, than the ſubtileſt intrigues and artifices of the Machiavilian Politician. Moments indeed there were, when we heard the hoarſe clamors of diſappointed ambition; and ſaw the dark movements of the ſons

of faction and anarchy: But experience teſted the wiſdom of his meaſures; and the tide of public reſpect and gratitude ſet with encreaſing fulneſs and force. The fame of the Preſident of the United States is equalled only by the glory of the General of the American Armies. In every future period of our national exiſtence, the inſtruction to the Military Commander, and the charge to the Political Guide, will be compriſed in one ſentence, GO, IMITATE OUR *WASHINGTON.*

With an equal mind our venerable countryman deſcended from his elevation. He was not corrupted by the power and influence of office. He conſented to become the head of his nation from a ſenſe of the duty he owed his country: Every public obligation fulfilled, he gladly reſorted to his beloved retirement. This act was pronounced by a celebrated Engliſh Philoſopher, as the conſummation of character; as the laſt evidence of the greatneſs of the man.

He was not long permitted, by his preſence to irradiate the circle of private life; by the ſmiles of his countenance to cheer the hearts of his friends and dependants. *His* ſun was

not to ſet in private, whoſe light roſe with public ſplendor, and ſhone with encreaſing luſtre to the perfect day. The majeſty of our nation was inſulted—her rights of ſovereignty were invaded, and ſhe ſummmoned her venerable chief to her aid. His mind, as true to the principle of patriotiſm as the needle to the pole, obeyed the ſummons. He unſheathed his ſword, and in the poſt of danger ſtood collected to repel the aggreſſions, and to revenge the injuries of an enemy, intoxicated with ambition, and inſolent from ſucceſs.

Our illuſtrious Citizen was as much diſtinguiſhed for the reverence of his God as for the love of his country. Religion had a lively influence on all the tranſactions of his life. In him we beheld piety without the gloominеſs of ſuperſtition; and devotion without the extravagance of enthuſiaſm.

Do you inquire into his private character? Follow him to his domeſtic walks; the ſcene of the quiet but refined virtues of man: With him enter the circle of his friends: Behold him in the boſom of his family: There you will ſee all the tender ſenſibilities of the human character; and witneſs the exerciſe of all the

offices of humanity and benevolence. The more beloved, the more known; as free from private as public blemiſh. So diffident of himſelf, as to be induced to engage in the arduous duties of the field and cabinet, only from reliance on divine wiſdom to aid good intentions, and divine ſtrength to ſucceed laudable exertions. So diſintereſted, as to refuſe every pecuniary reward for a life of public labor. So unconſcious of his own merits, as in aſtoniſhment to look around for the origin of that fame, which every breath of air wafted to his ear.

Such was the man, whoſe death we deplore: As fortunate as great: As happy as good.

In this period of expectation, when the convulſions of the old world ſhake the ſtableſt fabrics of antiquity; and threaten to lay proſtrate the pillars of ſocial order and national felicity, we fondly hoped the life of our beloved Citizen might have been protracted. In his influence we confided to check the progreſs of dangerous opinions; and to counteract the contagion of pernicious principles. Under him, we repoſed as the public ſhield, ſhould our country be invaded, and our armies encountered in the field of battle. But he is

gone, never more to engage in works of patriotism and humanity. Neither accomplishments of greatness, nor purſuits of dignity; public honors, nor national affection; extenſive wealth, nor domeſtic felicity, were a ſecurity for his exiſtence. That criſis is paſſed upon him, which Solon thought neceſſary to pronounce a man happy. He died as he had lived. His mind was fortified for the event, not by the cold maxims of philoſophy, but by the enlivening hopes of religion. The unaſſuming diſciple of the Prince of Life, to him the valley of death was illuminated by the beams of revelation: The proſpect of exchanging the glory of this world, for an unfading, an immortal wreath, ſupported him through the laſt ſcene of humanity.

Compare this exit with the impious boaſt of the great Frederic of Pruſſia: "Glory is my Deity. Glory is the only reward of great actions which I expect. I dare challenge the reſentment of Heaven; for by a voluntary death I can elude the power of God; and in vain will the Almighty hurl his thunderbolt againſt my tomb."*

* This ſentiment is contained in a treatiſe of the King of Pruſſia on the ſubject of Glory, publiſhed at Berlin, and addreſſed to Marſhal Keiſh.

In the public legacy of the Father of our country, we have the means to ſupport and perpetuate the fair fabric of national independence and happineſs, which his hand erected. His private Will teſtifies that the love of liberty in him was a living principle. He has undone the heavy burden and let the oppreſſed go free. As far as his power extended, he has given freedom to thoſe unhappy beings, whom avarice firſt enſlaved, and who are now holden in bondage by the plea of neceſſity.

Does the page of hiſtory contain a name more illuſtrious than his? Did man ever cloſe life with a reputation more immaculate? To compare him with thoſe, whoſe progreſs of ambition was marked with blood, and whoſe greatneſs was erected upon the agonies of the human heart, is to profane his virtues.

In other countries, individuals have been illuſtrious as Heroes and Stateſmen. The talents which immortalized their reſpective names were united in our American Alfred; and he was free from the vices and weakneſſes, which were the ſhades of their characters. In him were combined the moſt excellent qualities of man; and in his life appeared an aſſemblage

of the nobleſt virtues of humanity. "His life was one ſtream of light," and the ſhadow of night reſts not upon it. The picture of man in him was perfect, and there is no blot to tarniſh its brightneſs.

His character we muſt all contemplate with ſupreme delight: In it we view the dignity of our nature, and the glory of our race. As an American character, we may all exult in it, as the ornament of our nation and the honor of our age. As the Patriot, whoſe exalted talents and preeminent endowments were devoted to our country, we feel the obligations of public gratitude—we are melted to emotions of tenderneſs—we are diſpoſed to expreſs every mark of admiration and reſpect.

Let the ſculptured marble preſerve his reſemblance, and the ſuperb monument proclaim his achievements; theſe are but the decent expreſſions of the public mind. But the ſculptured marble and the coſtly monument are alike unneceſſary to perpetuate his worth. His memory is embalmed in the affections of his grateful countrymen: His name is written in the book of immortal fame: He ſhall be had in everlaſting remembrance.

His country has appreciated his merits. By a conſiſtency, as honorable to herſelf, as to him, her confidence has at no moment been withdrawn.

Privileged Mortal! endowed with heaven's beſt gifts; divinely ſupported in thy race of honor and glory: An enlightened and virtuous country to recognize thy merits; and a world for thine admirer!

Happy Country! to whom Heaven granted this illuſtrious perſonage to be thy Leader and Father, when thou didſt aſſume a name and a place among the nations of the earth.

Clothe thyſelf with mourning, O America! thy brighteſt ornament is faded: Dead is thy exalted, thy moſt beloved Son: Bow your heads, ye Warriors, in ſorrow! ſilent is that voice which waked the thunder of the battle; cold is the heart which animated you to victory and glory. Weep, ye fair Daughters of Columbia! weep in ſympathy with her, from whom is removed the greateſt and the beſt of men; whoſe reſidue of life muſt be dark and ſolitary.—Weep for yourſelves, your Protector is no more! While alive he never oppreſſed the heart of tenderneſs, nor cauſed the tear of

diſtreſs to fall from the eye of ſenſibility! Through luſt of triumph, he never made the wife a widow, or the child an orphan: He never conſumed the widow's morſel, or the orphan's bread. His conqueſts were thoſe of humanity: His power was ever exerciſed in defence of innocence and virtue. Bedew then his urn with the tear of gratitude! Teach your children to liſp his praiſe: Inſtil into their minds his ſpirit; and cheriſh in them the growth of his virtues.

Dwell, ye Youth, on his merits, till you riſe to admiration of his character! Enkindle in your hearts the love of country: Fan in your Souls the fire of Patriotiſm: Like him reverence your Maker: Regard moral obligations: Covet his endowments: Emulate his purity, his integrity and diſintereſtedneſs. Then ſhall you riſe up to fill the honorable ſtations of ſociety; and your country will call you bleſſed.*

Is the light of our nation extinct? or have we bodies which will ſhine only in the abſence of our Sun?

* Two hundred and fifty male youth, between the age of eight and eighteen years, walked by themſelves in the proceſſion of the day, and were ſeated in the galleries of the Meetinghouſe.

WISDOM, PATRIOTISM and VIRTUE, are the natural growth of our country. Purſue, my Fellow Citizens, the ſyſtem which has eſtabliſhed our nation. Tranſmit inviolate to poſterity, our fair national inheritance. Raiſe characters of worth to elective offices: Then, as an ADAMS has ſucceeded a WASHINGTON, to him ſhall ſucceed an uninterrupted line of illuſtrious Stateſmen and Patriots.

While on this day, we join in condolence with United America, let the feelings of mourning be blended with thoſe of gratitude to God, who made our countryman the greateſt public bleſſing. Let the grateful tribute be preſented on the altar of Heaven, that his invaluable life was preſerved in every hour of danger—that his magnanimous labors were crowned with ſucceſs—that he lived to witneſs the encreaſing proſperity of his nation—to be hailed the Savior of his country—to wear the teſtimonials of public affection and gratitude—to find his happineſs, in the happineſs of thoſe to whoſe intereſts he devoted his life—that he retained his powers nearly to the allotted period of human exiſtence; and was taken from the world without feeling the de-

cripitude of age, or ſuffering the degradation of a ſecond childhood.

SUCH was thy will, Heavenly Parent! In the exalted mind and dignified character of thy deceaſed Servant, we adore thy work: Through thy benignant influence his ſervices were made a rich national bleſſing. May his example form future public characters of wiſdom and virtue: And of thy mercy grant, the ſucceſs of his meaſures, to every adminiſtration of our government, till time ſhall be no more.

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